

eTravel on the Move

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The New Year marks agency-wide deployment of eTravel Service

It was a push to the finish, but agency migration teams with assistance from the eTravel Program staff worked diligently through the holidays to meet the December 31, 2004 milestone of placing eTS task orders. 21 of 24 BRM agencies have placed their task orders. A list of task order awards by agency can be found in the Document Library of the eTravel Web site at www.gsa.gov/etravel.

National Business Center and the Bureau of Public Debt also selected an eTS vendor. These cross servicing organizations, along with GSA, have agreements with over 30 non-BRM agencies to provide them with the eTravel Service.

This accomplishment attests to the value placed in eTS. The focus now turns to deployment – eTS vendors have already started working with agencies on interfaces and traveler training. The eTS Advisory Board established in May 2004 and newly established User Groups will begin sharing deployment experiences in support of assisting all agencies toward a common process. Chartered by GSA, each eTS vendor will have a User Group comprised of migration managers from the agencies their product is being used. Focus is on quality assurance and user satisfaction. In December eTS saw 2000 users, that number is expected to climb to 6000 by the end of January as reported in a December 27th Government Executive article by Daniel Pulliam.

IMPORTANT, even though your agency has selected an eTS vendor, deployment may not be planned for a few months. Your migration team has developed a roll out schedule which takes into consideration many business factors. They will notify you when your unit deploys and your training begins. If you have any questions about your agency's deployment contact your migration manager – a list of migration managers can be found in the Document Library of the eTravel Web site at www.gsa.gov/etravel.

AMBASSADOR'S CORNER: The place for feedback and recommendations from valued eTS customers

The newly created Ambassadors Club has the sole mission of fostering open communication between eTS users and the eTravel Program Office. In November two questions were given to the 600 members of the Club, here is what they said:

Q. How do you think the Program Office should communicate to the travelers in your agency about eTS? There are traditional ways such as newsletters and fliers but what about email and the Web. Which would work best in your agency?

A. **The majority of respondents said EMAIL but an important trend emerged, many of you recommended that communications go to one person in your agency for distribution. This will provide organization to the distribution.**

One member wrote, "I really appreciate that you want to communicate with individual government travelers and make sure they have their questions answered. However, I find that the employees in our agency already get too much information to sort through. I'd rather they not have to try to remember what they heard from GSA, vs. our Central Office vs. our Regional Policy staff. In addition we may be duplicating each others' work, or you may inadvertently phrase some item in a way that re-complicates a problem we were working on instead of clarifying the issue.

I think a monthly Q&A/newsletter via email to agency travel policy staffs would be sufficient, and then let us send it on out to individual travelers as appropriate. These emails could also be posted to a Web page that we could direct our travelers to as needed."

Q. How frequently should we send out Ambassador Club questions? We were thinking every few weeks. Does that seem reasonable?

A. The overwhelming response was, monthly - many also suggested issuing special editions of there is "breaking news".

Look for the Ambassador's Corner every month in the eTravel newsletter. This is where Club members are heard. If you would like to be a part of the Club contact us at [eTravel.gsa.gov](mailto:eTravel@gsa.gov).

Gov-wide Lodging program - 1,000 participating hotels and growing

The Federal Premier Lodging Program (FPLP), just topped 1,000 participating hotels on January 1, 2005.

Government travelers are now able to request FPLP hotels in almost every major U.S. city when making travel arrangements with their Travel Management Center (TMC). A list of participating FPLP hotels may also be found at <http://www.hotelsfplp.com>. The participating FPLP hotels are all priced at or below per diem rates; are FEMA approved; and are compliant with all other Federal Travel Regulation (FTR) policies.

Government travelers, travel managers, and travel arrangers are encouraged to book FPLP hotels when making travel arrangements for employees on official government travel. The FTR states that FPLP is a "first consideration" government-wide lodging program. More information on the program may be found at <http://www.fplphotels.com>.

National Travel Forum 2006 Just Announced

The National Travel Forum 2006 will be held at the Westin Bonaventure in Los Angeles June 26-29, 2006.